

Ep #183: Summer Foot Fun - Reducing and Eradicating Foot Pain



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Susi Hately

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Male Announcer: You're listening to *From Pain to Possibility* with Susi Hately. You will hear Susi's best ideas on how to reduce or even eradicate your pain and learn how to listen to your body when it whispers so you don't have to hear it scream. And now here's your host, Susi Hately.

Welcome and welcome back to *From Pain to Possibility*, a podcast that's focused on reducing and eradicating physical pain for yourself and your clients. And I'm your host, Susi Hately. And I'm so excited that you're here today because today I am launching a new mini-series on the feet.

I did this once before back in February, where I was running my Power of Pure Movement: Strong and Supple Feet. And well, I'm back at it again. We are running another one of the Strong and Supple Feet programmings in August. And so with this mini-series, I want to focus on all things summer, like flip-flops, walking barefoot, the increase of plantar fasciitis, and how we can make common foot stretches work really, really well for us.

And if you find that you get a lot out of what I'm sharing in this mini-series and you want to dig into it even more with me in the Power of Pure Movement: Strong and Supple Feet, then I encourage you to join me. And all you need to do is go check out the link learn.functionalsynergy.com/feet. All the details are there and you can register and enroll there for our August program.

In the meantime, let's talk about feet on this podcast episode. So we're going to be covering, as I mentioned, the wearing of flip-flops, going barefoot, the increasing tendency towards plantar fasciitis and then how we can improve the common foot stretches that are out there by simply adding in little doses of yoga and mindfulness, meditation and breathwork and really tuning into your tissue. Because as I love to say, tissue can change, healing is possible, lots is available to you.

With this episode, I want to bring in just a key reminder to set us off on our path. And the key reminder is this, that even though the feet is a structure that we do need to help improve, and there's lots going on in the feet and

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there's lots of available places for us to explore in the feet, it's really vital to understand, at least from my perspective, that the feet are more than just the feet. And we need to be able to relate the feet to the hip. It's so important.

I spoke about this more in the February series and I'll speak about it again here because it's so vital. Because we can look at the feet as being like I like to call it, the part that punctuates our posture. It is the part that lands on the ground. Lots of people see it as the foundation because it is the piece that's on the ground. A lot of times in yoga people will build up yoga poses from the feet upward, lots of focus there.

And when people tend to over focus on the feet, and over is a really important part of that verbiage I'm just using. When people over focus on the feet, they can create a lot more tightness and tension that they're not intending. When we can start to see the feet as part of the whole kinetic chain, and I'm going to begin that kinetic chain at the pelvis, so much can change.

So when we take our eyes up towards the top of the chain, we see how the femur connects into the acetabulum, which is part of that pelvis. And we can look at this in three different ways. The first is that the pelvis is the platform on which the leg bone swings. And how that leg bone swings and where that swing ends has an impact on how that heel will strike.

And then the way we move through that weight transfer, so then the heel strikes, the foot lands, we come through and swing the opposite leg through, our ability to have stability up in the pelvis and how that leg bone sits and moves in the hip socket will have a huge impact on what goes on in the foot. A huge impact and what goes on in the foot because what ends up happening in terms of the foot deviations is often, not always, but is often in response to what is or is not happening up in the hip socket.

So I'll be speaking more about this in the upcoming episodes. Today, what I want to do though, is just provide you an experience of how this might be

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possible. I'm going to walk you through some really simple massage techniques of your foot so you can start to feel your foot in perhaps a new way, or at least in a refreshed way. And then we're going to do a couple of breathing exercises and awareness exercises up in through your pelvis and your hip. And these might just open up your awareness to what's going on between your pelvis, your leg and your foot.

Then as we get into the subsequent episodes, I'll kind of take you deeper into the idea and you can start to see more of the patterns related between your pelvis, your leg and your foot.

I am a big fan of patterns. Single data points are really interesting, like foot pain, that's a data point. And foot pain in a specific area is a data point, when we can start to see more of the whole kinetic chain and understand the functioning of more of those pieces we begin to see more of the patterns. And when we see the pattern, we really can make change significantly.

All right, so let's start to play. Let's come down to your feet, you don't need any props for this, just your fingers. I want you to take your fingers at your toe area. So you're just going to play around with your big toe, and then the second toe and just gently move through your foot.

So you're kind of pulling the toes ever so slightly away from the forefoot and wiggling them around a little bit. And then play around with just bringing those toes toward your shin and then pointing your toes away from your shin, so towards the floor. And then relax your foot and let your hands go away from your foot and notice what your toes feel like with just that little bit of effort.

And then over to the other side, taking that big toe, the first toe, and gently pulling it away from the forefoot. And the same thing with the second toe. And you're doing a little bit of a pull, but also a little bit of a wiggle. And be gentle with this, we're not trying to pull the toe off of the foot. We're just giving it a little bit of a pull, a little bit of a wiggle.

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See what you feel, it may even be that you feel the tissue in a certain way. Maybe there's some tightness or some tension. And then gently bring the toes toward your shin. And you're using your hand. So you're passively moving those toes towards your shin. And then pointing the toes away from you towards the floor.

Okay, and just let that go. And just by doing that, like just a little bit of toe exercise, what are you feeling through your foot? There might be some more blood flow. There might be some tissue released that you can feel different in the arches of your feet maybe. Maybe even down towards your heel. And also notice yourself breathing. Is there anything new or different that you're feeling up further into your body, up towards your head even?

And then bring yourself into standing, or sitting at least with your feet on the floor. And bring your attention to three key points of your feet: the center of the heel, the ball of the foot and the base of your pinky toe. And it's not that you need to have equal weight on these three points, just simply notice that they're touching the floor.

And if you are in sitting, then start to move yourself up into standing and notice how the weight shifts between those three points as you come up into standing. And does one arch sort of fall inward? Or do they stay as they are? What do you notice in terms of the resiliency or the flexibility or the suppleness of your feet through those three points as you come up into standing?

Or if you are in standing, have a walk around and notice yourself as you move about. Can you feel those three points as you move through your gait pattern?

Next, I'd love for you to pay attention to your breathing and to simply notice yourself inhaling and exhaling. And notice if you feel anything different at the bottom of your feet as you inhale and exhale. Does anything change in your perception as you bring your attention to your inhale and exhale and

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what you can perceive through the three points or anything else in your feet?

And not that you need to. Sometimes people have the impression that when I'm giving these types of instructions that there should be something changing. And that's not it at all. Just take note if it is. It's not bad and it's not good if you did or didn't, it's just another data point. It just begins to bring awareness to the experience that you're having with your feet in relationship to the whole of your being and your body.

Because what becomes interesting is if you're someone who tends to hold tension, either in your thinking or in your breath or in your emotion, as an example, you might notice that you hold tension in your feet. And when those begin to shift, then you might feel your feet a little bit different.

Or maybe you've been sitting all day, and purely from a physical standpoint when you've been sitting all day, your feet might get a little bit tighter or just out of touch from your body because you've been sitting. So then when you come back up into standing, it's like, oh, I didn't even notice that I wasn't noticing my feet.

Or if you're someone who sits on their foot and then your foot goes to sleep and then you come back and it's like, I can't even put weight on my foot and there's all that tingling. Notice if you can bring just a little bit of attention to at least one or more of those points, and does that bring back awareness and feeling more so? So it becomes this qualitative exploration of your feet in relationship to your whole.

Okay, so now where I'd like you to move to is into your pelvic floor. And you've got your pubic bone and your sitting bones, and the very bottom of your spine, which is your coccyx. It forms a basic diamond, where the top of the diamond and the back of the diamond is the pubic bone and then the coccyx. And then the sides of the diamond, those two side corners are your ischial tuberosities or your sitting bones.

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And then in between that is the tissue of your pelvic floor. And then there's the orifices by which matter and fluid pass. And we want that pelvic floor to be both strong and supple. And interestingly, I lead off this podcast episode with how our feet are both stable and supple, sometimes rigid and flexible. So there's a correlation, interestingly enough, between our pelvic floor and the function of our feet.

So if you're able to, simply bring your attention to your breath to your pelvic floor. And notice when you bring your attention there, does that shift or change anything in your feet? And this can be a very general awareness of breathing in your pelvic floor. You can also think about breathing through the orifices of your pelvic floor.

So you're relaxing just enough that you can imagine that there's breath coming through those orifices of the pelvic floor. Sometimes this can soften up the lower belly as well. And people have told me that they feel their feet more clearly, or they feel more supple, or they feel more grounded, or they feel stronger through their legs. Other people, it's like, I'm not even sure what you're talking about, Susi, I feel no correlation at all. And that's also a valid experience to have.

So anything between those, just notice what your own experience is. I know that when I was running quite a bit, I would take notice of how my pelvic floor was sitting in my pelvis as I was running. And if my feet had a tendency on a run to get tight, I often noticed an interesting correlation with my pelvic floor.

So if I simply breathe through either my feet or my pelvic floor, my gait in my running would pick up, but with less effort. So if you're a walker, or a hiker, or if you're a stair climber, it's something just to play with. Because not only has that been my story, I've heard that from other clients of mine, as well as colleagues of mine, when they're able to tune into this relationship between their pelvic floor and their feet and there is a relationship for them.

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And by that, I mean there is a correlation tissue wise that when one is a little bit limited, the other one can express a limitation. And as one starts to gain more suppleness, the other one starts to shift. And as I've mentioned, not everybody has this same relationship.

And if you do, it can be really powerful in its subtlety around how there's an effortless in terms of climbing stairs, hiking up mountains, coming down stairs, coming down mountains. It's really interesting in terms of exploring the tissue, your function, and how you move about your day to day life.

So tuning into the breathing through the orifices, into the feet. And one last one is noticing the space between your toes. And in some cases, you might not have any space. You might have toes that overlap. So notice the overlapping, notice the space. And without trying to make any changes to what it is that you're experiencing, with just this idea of space in mind, whether you're sitting with your feet on the ground or you are walking about, or you're climbing stairs, notice what starts to change, if anything.

This baseline of awareness becomes really interesting when we start adding in shoes like flip-flops. Or if you're someone who's worn shoes a lot and you go barefoot, or if you're someone who has a tendency towards plantar fasciitis. This baseline becomes really interesting to explore from, and then to serve as a reminder as we work through the implications and the interesting insights we gain around flip-flopping, barefooting and then working with plantar fasciitis.

And then as we finish up this mini-series around the common foot stretches and how we can make them even more effective, this baseline serves as just a leaping off ground for where you can then go to. So I encourage you to continue to play with these ideas and relisten to this episode if needed.

And if you're already resonating with some of what I'm sharing and you want to get into the program, *The Power of Pure Movement: Strong and Supple Feet*, I encourage you to go check out

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learn.functionalsynergy.com/feet, it would be so much fun to work with you. You can read through the testimonials and stories of other people who took the program in February, what they gained from it. And I would love that for you too. Learn.functionalsynergy.com/feet. See you next time.

Oh and by the way, if what I'm saying is really resonating with you from a professional standpoint, I am also in the enrollment process right now for our certification program. This is my yoga therapy certification program where we get into all of the stuff so much more deeply and enable you to work with your clientele to help them reduce and eradicate physical pain.

You actually get three certifications out of my certification program. And you can get all of those details by emailing me at health@functionalsynergy.com. I would love, love, love to chat with you. Take good care.